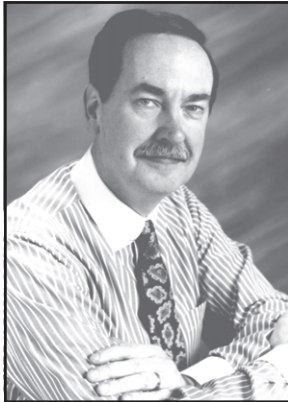


# The Cal Thomas Column



Cal Thomas

## HIT THE ROAD JACK

The argument one hears most often for not enforcing illegal immigration laws is that we can't deport the estimated 12 million people already in this country. It just isn't physically, tactically or politically possible, say people who think this way.

Maybe not, but authorities can start with people who not only broke laws to get here, but are breaking more laws now that they are here.

Virginia's Republican Attorney General, Robert McDonnell, is beginning the deportation process with a class of people not even the most vehemently pro-immigrant activist should defend. They are sex offenders and McDonnell, working in cooperation with the Virginia State Police and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials, has identified 171 people who have been convicted of sex crimes. Some are illegal aliens, others have legal status, but their convictions violate the conditional terms of their residency and make them subject to deportation.

In a telephone interview from Richmond, McDonnell told me that because federal statutes have pre-empted what states can do on most immigration issues, Virginia had to look for ways to initiate deportation of criminal sex offenders while working with the federal government. Asked whether the targeting of illegal alien sex offenders is the first step toward going after other criminal aliens, McDonnell said, "We're planning to do all of them. My position is that criminal illegal aliens or criminal aliens have forfeited their right to be in the country. There is broad agreement, regardless of which side people are on in the illegal immigration debate, that the criminal alien should be detained and deported."

In addition to checking on the immigration status of everyone released from a Virginia prison, McDonnell says people convicted of crimes will now be investigated for their residency status before they are locked up, possibly allowing the federal government to deport them prior to their serving all of their sentence.

One northern Virginia jurisdiction with a high illegal alien population is the city of Manassas. In response to intense citizen complaints, the Manassas City Council has authorized local police to begin checking the immigration status of people they arrest for any crime. If they find the suspects are in the country illegally, they are now authorized to begin deportation proceedings. On March 3, 2008, neighboring Prince William County began implementing a similar program to crackdown on illegals. These two jurisdictions are in sync with what McDonnell is now doing statewide.

Immigrant rights leader Ricardo Juarez of Mexicans Without Borders (a name that tells you something about his goal) is quoted in The Washington Examiner newspaper as saying, "This policy will only make the situation ... worse and will drive people out." Precisely. That is the intent of the program; to drive criminal illegal aliens out, preferably back to where they came from and especially if they have twice violated our laws.

Not all of the Virginia sex offenders fit the demographic stereotype. Yes, most are from Mexico, or Central and South American countries, but quite a few are from other nations, including Ethiopia, India, Iran, Thailand, even Scotland. So this is not about ethnicity. It is about breaking the law.

The issue of illegal immigration and most especially that of criminal aliens should be a major issue in the presidential campaign. It is bad enough when immigration activists countenance the breaking of our laws and defend people who do it; it is something else when they attempt to defend sex offenders and others who have broken other laws while here.

There is no right to come to America, but there is an obligation to obey the same laws everyone else has to obey or suffer the consequences. Virginia and at least two of its jurisdictions are onto something. Other states and localities might wish to consider a similar approach.

The federal government seems to be getting the message. Perhaps shamed by Virginia, immigration officials, according to the Washington Post, are now actively "scouring jails and courts nationwide" to identify immigrants who qualify for deportation. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) reports that in a 12-month period ending last Sept. 30, "it placed 164,000 criminals in deportation proceedings," an increase from the 64,000 the agency identified and placed in deportation proceedings the previous year. ICE "estimates the number will rise to 200,000 this year."

It's a start.

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